CECIL CHARLES

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Tuya

Other Verses

and

Translations from José Martí

By Cecil Charles

New York
J. E. Richardson
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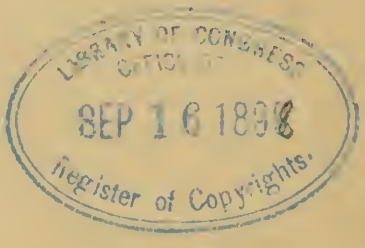

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46914
Aug. 8
1898

To

General Bradley Tyler Johnson

A Little Offering

of

Esteem and Friendship

TUYA

TUYA.

A Memory of the Cabañas Prison.

A woman reigned in Spain. We blamed her not—
Ere she was born our fathers knew the shame
Of ankle-chains and dungeons where should rot
Man in God's image till Death's mercy came.
Corruption cursed the land : nor childish King
Nor Queen was in our thoughts—save only those
Red days of feast when gay flags fluttering
Proclaimed the latest mockery of our woes.

My respite had been long—my brothers out
Under the Single Star (and all Heaven's stars)
Fought and were slain—or came not back to doubt
The justice of our never-ending wars.
But I stayed, neutral in my actions through
Scarce selfish motives, chief of all the face
Of that proud beauty of the Cerro who
In happier hours had deigned to show me grace.

Neutral and heart-sore. . . . till my turn had come:
The search at midnight—the accusing lies—
The ropes that gnawed my arms—the boat—the dumb
And staring misery in my comrades' eyes.
The zig zag pathway to the fortress height—
The ditch where if hearts' blood were seed a sea
Of scarlet flowers should flame and blind the sight
Of all who glanced that way—it seemed to me.

Two-score we numbered in the fortress-cave—
Foul atmosphere and fouler food ; our beds
The humid stones ; it might have been a grave
For ooze and vermin where we laid our heads.
While through the massive bars we saw but these :
The court with glare of tropic sunshine lit—
The Spanish soldiers jeering at their ease
In the cuartel's gray windows opposite.

The ragged sentries pacing dull and slow—
The line of guards at noon to face the cell,
Their guns aimed at the door when to and fro
It swung—the water tins with filthy smell.
Within we strove to help each other : some
Lay stupid-eyed with fever ; in my turn
I huddled caring little what might come
And only knew how veins afire could burn.

Some days came visitors to stand within
The court : and we too gaunt and yellow grown
And hardly clean of visage, reached out thin
And eager, trembling hands to clasp their own.
Mothers and wives and sisters—these were there—
Yet none who loved me ; never sign or breath
Of the proud Cerro beauty whose despair
Had held me neutral for this living death.

One later morning when great gusts of wind
Tore up the court's loose sand to smart our eyes,
I, looking forth with soul-sick wish and blind
Desire to toil beneath Ceuta's skies,
Forgetting so my pain of love betrayed—
Perceived without the bars a-sudden new grace—
A slender shape, white-garmented, a maid
Of delicate and pallor-wistful face.

Great eyes had she : they brimmed with shining tears
Like springs in time of rain among the hills ;
And brow and cheek were white with generous fears
For the caged humans bowed beneath their ills.
And one poor comrade limping front his way
Whispered within my ear her name and said :
"A doctor's daughter out of Camaguey—
An angel—and an orphan—parents dead."

Well. . . she came often. Hers the hands that passed
The fragrant coffee in to us and cheered
With sweets and flowers ; the court seemed overcast
With a black shadow till her face appeared.
Thus we grew friends and spoke of days to be—
Nor I the only suffering suspect whom
She comforted with hope of liberty
And saved from madness in the dungeon gloom.

In Cuba grows a shrub of spicy scent—
Cedar or what ? No botanist am I—
I only know that maidens give it blent
With bud or blossom to the suitor shy
Or diffident, slow sweetheart and he knows
That he may hope and speak. . . One day she wore
This sprig—they call it *Tuya*—with a rose—
And my heart leaped as never heart before.

Dumb with desire and jealous throbbing then
I watched her move from place to place. In hate
I marked the sentry pass and pass again
Harassing with his husky "Separate !"
She faltered, turned, unpinned the token sweet
And, ere my brain in whirl of ecstasy
Foresaw her purpose and my joy complete,
Reached forth her gentle hand and gave it me.

O, Mary ! Holiest Mother ! What light flashed
Throughout the calabozo, turned the bars
To gold and spread its splendor unabashed. . .
In her angelic eyes I saw the stars
Above the hills of Oriente shine,
And mountain springs where thirsty men should drink;
And felt the winds of Freedom blow divine
From sea expanse along vast river brink.

Yea, in her gaze transfigured all were clear—
The False that perished and the lasting True
Surmounting woe, unchecked by pride or fear. . .
Of Love's sublimity now first I knew.
Of Love that lifts from fallen, sad estate,
Binds up most cruel wounds and soothes and cures
With self-forgetfulness and delicate
Soft interposing of its tenderest lures.

* * * *

From Northern lands of calm—from faraway
With dawn of peace and all the tremulous light
Of hope upon the island—with the day
Of triumph and of justice breaking bright—
I bless the pain by which my joy was bought
And the dark hour of agony when she,
My saint, my angel of the fortress brought
A sprig of *Tuya* and a rose to me !

OTHER VERSES

BEING A WOMAN.

Once a woman came,
  Within a graveyard close,
Suddenly on a name
  Unhidden by vine or rose.

There it was he lay,
  Who long had wronged her sore,
Harmed her many a day—
  But never should harm her more.

Bare and bleak the stone
  That marked his place of sleep,
Slowly the days had flown—
  Had no one come to weep?

Long she stood and gazed—
  Disarmed as he who slept;
Then with her eyes upraised,
  Being a woman—she wept!

CONSUELO.

Never was born
  Of a mortal she
Who came through the dark
  That encompassed me—
Like a white rose shorn
  Of the stem and thorn
That were grim and stark.

Softly she fell
  From out of a star
That drooped like a flower
  When dawn was not far
And the night's sweet spell
  Wrought the miracle
In that breathless hour.

Petal of flame
  From the star's white breast
To the dark of the earth
  And my heart oppressed—
Whispering her name
  Swiftly she came
Of celestial birth.

AWAKENING.

In the dark of my room like a soul entombed
  That the overhead clods can never destroy,
I awoke, for a-sudden the lilacs bloomed
  And the whole world reeked with joy.

The birds were maddening under the eaves
  And a scent in the nostrils that pierced I knew—
Of rain on the dust of the road and of leaves
  That had never yet felt the dew.

In the dark I awoke with a monstrous pain
  Where my heart was anguish-rent to its core—
And the voice of the Spring beating into my brain
  That I never could trust you more.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS.

Nay, not too near me. At a little length
I like you, prize you, rate you as I should;
You are so charming and so fine, with strength
For conquests by the gay world not withstood.

I like you off a little, then, I say;
Your fascinating faces massed with art;
Each shining down the other, in the way
Some women do—some women without heart.

Some of you are so snowy fragile—some
As golden blonde as Winter sunlight rare;
And some are haughtier with the hues that come
Of hardier breeding—but you all are fair.

Quite cold, with Winter's chill upon you, too—
No slightest fragrance, nor of warmth a glow;
I have known proud and radiant women who
Were just as you are—without sweetness. . . So—

Ah, so—I like and prize you as you are,
But come not you too near me with your arts;
Two things are better worshipped from afar:
Flowers without perfume—women without hearts!

DISABLED.

Can we battle it out alone,
  My soul, my soul?
Here in the bleak unknown,
  Leagues on leagues away from the shore, in the roll
Of a mighty tempest blown,
And flung and thrown
  In the savage sea's control?

Can we suffer it out despite,
  My heart, my heart?
After the murky night,
  Dawn and calm and peace and a faithful chart,
And a mariner steering right,
Though cheeks be white
  And sinews rent apart?

Can we weather it out with splice
  And sail o'erhead?
Anchor and chain device,
  Thus to labor to port from the gates of the dead,
Averting the sacrifice,
The fearful price
  Of yielding and being led?

Are we saved as the helmsman steers
  Past rock and shoal?
High in the splendid spheres
  God is watching and guiding us to the goal.
We shall reach the land no fears,
Nor enslaved for years,
  Nor the salvage cost the soul!

AT DAWN.

At dawn my soul was sleeping,
  My body was awake;
Gray through the glass was creeping—
  I heard the shutters shake.
I knew the wind's wild screaming,
  I knew the wintry day;
And still my soul was dreaming
  A blissful dream of May.

Somewhere, through fields of sweetest
  Young grass and clover grace,
It wandered, now with fleetest
  And now with loitering pace.
It felt the rush of breezes
  That blew from some far shore,
It knew a thousand eases
  It ne'er had known before.

It marvelled, as it wandered,
  The wonderous light and balm
And bloom and perfume squandered
  Throughout the meadows calm.
When sudden there came voices
  Melodious as a brook
That faraway rejoices
  In some green woodland nook.

All joyous these words saying—
A cry of jubilee:
"O, soul that comest straying,
O, soul that now art free,
Laugh through the fields of clover,
The sky is blue o'erhead;
The days of grief are over,
The heart, the heart is dead!

"Old hours of pain and madness
Shall not return again;
Of anguish or of gladness
No memory shall remain.
Thou, like the wind a rover,
No more shalt fear or dread;
The days of love are over—
The heart, the heart is dead!"

LEAVING YOU.

Oh, Summer was gone and the birds had fled
In the wake of the cold, red sun;
And blossom and leaf—and our love—were dead,
Our love that had scarce begun.
And I said with the flight of the sun,
I said, "It is meet it were done!"

"I'm leaving you, love, forever,
Leaving you, false and fair;
Your hand had the strength of a lever
To toss my world in the air.
Your eyes at deceiving were clever,
Your face was a snare for men!
I'm leaving you, love, forever,
We never shall meet again."

Oh, slowly the Winter had fled—had fled
From the heart of the earth grown chill;
I fancied my sorrow was dead, long dead,
And never should waken to thrill!
Then I heard like an echo long still,
Through meadows of pale daffodil:

"You're leaving me, love, forever,
Leaving me pale and wan;
All needless, your cruel endeavor—
The light from my eyes has gone.
And my face would trouble you never,
For under the sod and the stone,
You're leaving me, love, forever;
Leaving me here—alone!"

A LITTLE SONG.

A little song, a little song,
  My love, I fain would sing you;
A little song, nor loud nor long,
  Of Summer days I'd bring you—
Of Southern worlds that basking lie
In sun of March from tropic sky,
Of winds that soft through woodlands sigh,
And birds that winnowing shadows fly,
  My love, my love, I'd sing you.

A little song, a little song,
  My love, my own, to woo you!
In soothing song, nor loud nor long,
  Of fields afar I'd sue you,
To warmer lands of fronded palm,
And emerald valleys rich with balm,
And life all tenderness and calm,
And love more holy than a psalm,
    My love, my love, I'd woo you!

HER 'CELLO.

When you play the 'cello, my queen, I know
  When you play the 'cello,
With clinging, irresistible bow
You draw from the depths of its bosom so
  Its love-dreams mellow
  In song to flow—
When you play the 'cello.

When you play the 'cello, my dear, my dear,
  When you play the 'cello!
The land-width lessens, the sea seems near,
The sun sets swiftly, the night is clear,
  The great moon yellow
  Looks over our sphere—
And you play the 'cello.

When you play the 'cello such pangs you wake,
  When you play the 'cello—
The heart from my bosom is fain to break,
The soul from my body its flight would take
  Seeking its fellow—
  For love's dear sake—
When you play the 'cello!

MARKET NIGHT.

Foul air, and humid with the thousands' breath!
  For overhead the heavens are vapor-clogged;
  The stars retreat, still in their passage dogged
By clouds malign and vengeanceful as death.

A sultry night—a night of sickening scents—
  Shrill cries and brutal laughter, jest and smirk,
  And flaring lights to show what lies may lurk
Through venders' greed-begotten blandishments.

Great God! To-night what stifling sense of dole!
  Scarce rightly human seems this moving mass;
  Scarce any spark in all these shapes that pass
Of that divine and deathless thing, the soul.

A sea of brutish life—floodtide it seems!
  And on the strong swell flotsam of the worst;
  The swinish jostle and the eyes accursed
Of shame that burn and torture one in dreams.

'Tis market night! The mob must rule with jeer
  And oath . . . How have I dared to come this
    way,
  With heart now ice, now fire, "Ah, God!" to
    pray,
"What joy, what anguish, should I find her here!"

LOST.

The sun is sliding to the South,
  The wind the last leaf shakes;
There is no longer heat or drouth,
  Save in my heart that aches.
There is no longer leafy screen
  Or sunlight filtering down,
There is no longer emerald sheen—
  The frozen fields are brown.

O, Winter's wind is one that blows
  From the ice-bound vales of Hell!
And heaven lies past the glittering snows
  Of heights I know too well.
'Twixt Heaven and Hell one step—but one!
  I paused in dread and fear;
Across the pass a wild cloud spun,
  I could not see or hear!

There in the dark, I called to you—
  My voice it seemed a moan!
And fell—God knows what distance through—
  Ay, fell, and fell alone!
But everywhere I see your face,
  And everywhere your name
Stares at me from the gray of space
  In letters writ with flame.

PARAPHRASE.

(WALT WHITMAN.)

Once I passed through a populous city, imprinting my
brain for the days
Of the future with shows, architecture, traditions and
customs and ways.
Strangely now, out of all of that city, I remember no
more than the face
Of a woman I met, who detained me and chained me
for love to the place.
Day by day, night by night she was with me, all else
has long vanished in air—
I remember, I say, but the woman who clung to me
passionate-fair.
Once again we go wandering and loving, we falter at
thought of good-byes,
Once again at my side in the shadow, with lips that
are quivering with sighs—
O, she clings to my hand in the shadow and holds me
with piteous eyes !

THE ROSARY.

Her rosary upon her breast—
'Tis thus her gentle heart has rest.
She was too fair and fine we say,
Too delicate and meek to stay.

Mute witness in each pearly bead
The eyes that love her still may read—
Mute witness of her piety
And all things maidenly that be.

Like frozen tears that Love might lose
Above her bent, whose lips refuse
To answer—lips till now so kind—
And with such silence sealed and signed.

Like frozen tears, alas! they rest
Upon her marble, unstirred breast,
More white than silken robe or flower,
Spread round her at this last sweet hour.

She was too fair to die, they say,
She was too pure on earth to stay.
Grief's passionate tears, that else would burn,
Upon her breast to pearls may turn.

MY DREAM.

Love and I wandered where
  On verdurous, splendid heights
We breathed Elysium's air
  And saw the quivering lights
Of Heaven—O, keen sweet hour
That held us in its power!

Sudden, in thrall of bliss
  Led on by venturous hopes,
We came to precipice—
  The end of emerald slopes:
Below gray chasm of stones
And whitening human bones.

Turning I saw the face
  Of Love (or him I took
For Love) stripped of all grace—
  Distorted, wild with look
Of cruelest, awful hate
That warned me over late.

He made as if to hold
  And thrust me o'er the edge—
I shrieked—my lips were cold—
  One instant on the ledge—
Then I was glad to go
To the kind stones below.

MOONRISE.

I remember a night—I remember a night in Naples.
* * * *
Slowly the moon dispels the gray sky-hue,
Here in the shade of the porch I see through the maples,
Quivering, overawed, a star or two.

On the silence comes the voice of the sea unending.
Beautiful sea or terrible, as you will—
Yonder, beyond the arm of the land defending
This, the bay that I love, most sweet and still.

It was long ago, yet it seems last night I heard it,
"Santa Lucia!" the song of the people there;
And the languorous sigh of the bay, as a light wind stirred it
Under the quay, along by the boatmen's stair.

It was long ago—in the dusk she leaned and kissed me!
Eyes were watching us, lips were cursing us too;
'Twas a serpent's dart—and the keen stiletto missed me!
Would to God it had pierced me through and through!

From the clinging, courtier clouds the moon emerges,
Sovereign unsurpassed of the realm of night;
Low in the distance the sea responsive surges,
Chanting a solemn praise of the Lady of Light!

I remember a night—I remember a night in Naples.
* * * *
Strangely the scenes of the past with their passionate glow
Come to oppress me, here in the shade of the maples,
Wounded by worse than the stab of a murderous foe!

A JULY MADNESS.

Oh, my head is aching so !
Oh, for the woodland far
And the shining fields of green I know,
Where the blue marsh lilies are !

I could be so quiet there,
Never a word complain ;
Here the sun-baked roof-tops glare
After the paltry rain.

There the passionate, spicy scent
Of the roses by the path,
And the dust from the waving filament
That the honeysuckle hath.

I could be so patient, calm,
Doze in the midday still ;
Rouse at the touch of the breeze's balm,
With the sun behind the hill.

All the peace and the freedom sweet
From the cares that drag me down,
And the deafening din and the scorching heat
And the foul ways of the town !

Oh, my heart is aching so !
Oh, for the woodland far !
And the shining fields of green I know,
Where the pale marsh lilies are !

THE WIDER ZONE.

Swinging here in the sun
  I dreamed of a voice I knew
In days that long are done—
In years whose course is run—
  A voice that was sweet and true.

Surely it was her tone:
"Ah! if you only knew!
We who have greater grown—
We of the Wider Zone—
  We are not far from you!"

Something brushed my face—
  Was it a bird that flew?—
And I heard a rush through space,
As a mighty populace
  Might seem to tread the blue.

Sobbing, "Oh, sweet," I said,
"Once I guessed a clue:
That the world's own living dead
Went moving overhead,
  And they were the winds that blew."

"Springtime's balmiest wind
Was soul of such as you;
And heavier gusts that blind
And Wintry blasts unkind,
A stern-souled retinue."

Surely it was her own
Tenderest voice and true;
"We of the Wider Zone—
We of the World Unknown—
How close are we to you!"

THE PICTURE.

Some ghost had lingered on the stair
And breathed upon the window panes;
I saw a spirit picture there—
Low hills and winding lanes.

So white the landscape lay, and chill,
At length I made its meaning out:
A churchyard frozen pale and still
And narrow mounds about.

Methought my love long buried there
Called to me with a piteous cry:
"My grave I can no longer bear—
Too cold—too cold, am I!

"Oh take me to thy heart once more
And warm me for a little space
In the great glow I felt of yore
When Love had lit thy face!"

Ah, me! The pain that rent me then.
To hear that sorrowing cry and know
I might not clasp her hands again,
And touch her cheek of snow.

"I would give half my life," I said,
"If I could have her back with me—
This love of mine long dead—long dead!
And I would kinder be!"

"Ay, half my life, could I believe
She knew my sorrow and forgave—
Though on this boreal Winter eve
The snow be on her grave!"

A gleam! Thank heaven the daybreak rends
My cruel dream! My love stills lives
By sunlit fields her way she wends,
She greets me and forgives!

DISCONTENT.

Your limpid, languorous, lovely eyes,
  They scorn or freeze me, moving slow ;
You are a thing to court and prize—
  And yet, my dear, I hate you so.

Your voice is marvellous sweet to-day,
  The perfume of your silken gown
Creeps over me with subtle play—
  You cannot even spare a frown.

And still, my dear, I hate your chains,
  Such recollections in me live—
To break from where your beauty reigns
  There is no price I would not give.

You cannot even spare a frown,
  Your brow is tranquil and you smile ;
My thoughts by land and sea have flown
  A thousand tedious leagues the while.

There is no price I would not pay
  To slip this musk-warm, stifling room,
This wintry world of snow and gray,
  And stand within a world of bloom.

A world of tropic scent and sheen,
  Forever washed by sapphire seas ;
Long valleys of delicious green
  Stirred sweetly by the wind at ease.

And there the old free life and calm,
  The old free life that nature lent ;
A cabin with a thatch of palm,
  A dusk-browed woman—and content.

I close my eyes and all is won.
  The breeze upon my cheek is mild ;
High overhead the tropic sun—
  And Chata singing to the child.

IN COFFEE FIELDS.

I.—CLOUD.

" Flor de café—flor de café !
Treasure of April, forgotten in May."
Sweetly she sang—softly she sang—
O'er the green meadows the Angelus rang.
Eventime came, vesper time came—
Paled the sun's passion to ashen from flame.

Flor de café—flor de café !
Flood tide of perfume to sweep one away.
Hushed were the fields, warm tropic fields—
Warm with the dusk that entices and shields ;
Green boughs above—star flowers above—
Only the coffee bloom breathing of love.

Flor de café—flor de café !
Lovers in ambush and maidens that stray ;
Clouds in the sky, rain in the sky ;
Should one live weeping? Ah, could one but die !
Flor de café—flor de café,
Treasured in April and trampled in May !

II.—SUNSHINE.

To-day the coffee blossoms under skies
More blue and beautiful than angels' eyes ;
The rain has wandered to the south—the wind
Still lingers in the valley sweets to find.
The brooks that leap from every emerald slope
Sing and my heart sings with them of its hope ;
A flash of sunlight through the whole world ran—
My sweet, you loved me—and my life began.

The roads are hedged with pink and purple bloom—
The earth is all a-tremble with perfume ;
There is no trouble in the world to-day,
A breath of laughter could not blow away.
If ever care oppressed me it has fled,
If ever grief could grieve me it is dead ;
I know no more of shadowy hours and wan—
O, when you loved me then my life began !

So, rest your hand in mine and let us stray
Like happy children through the fields away ;
Life is so blissful when the years are few—
Age is so far away when love is true.
There is no past, nor weariness, nor fears
Though you or I had lived a thousand years,
To-day their length should dwindle to a span ;
For when we loved—ah, then our life began !

LA SIESTA.

Noon—and the house is deserted, I alone taking my rest,
Swung from the rafters of cedar, safe as a bird in its nest.
Scent in the air of the mountains, tropical heavens above,
Hum of machinery and voices, speech of the Spanish I love;
Cool, though the sunlight tremendous scorches adobe and tile—
Down from the coast pours the sea wind, southward through pass and defile
Down from the coast and the sea with its measureless meadows of blue
Shutting one off from the chill of the North and the world—and from you!

Strange—was I dozing or dreaming? Just for a moment of space.
Here as I lay in the shadow, here in the peace of the place—
Hardly disturbed me the voices, the creaking of carts as they rolled.
Hardly the roar of the stamp mill that thundered out silver and gold.
Sudden—the murmur and throbbing—somehow it seemed I was there—
Back in the North and the city, never so fatally fair:
Ill in my attic and hearing the din of the town. . . . once again
Staking my all on a traitor, only to lose it—as then!

LUNA NUEVA.

Last night I saw the argent curve
With veils of vapor clinging,
A jewel angels might preserve
From night's blue mantle swinging.

It drooped above a southern land—
A myriad stars attending—
Drooped slow, by dreamy breezes fanned
To the sea's breast descending.

More softly mellow now it seemed
Than nights long past we found it,
When in the icy north it gleamed
With snow-clouds to surround it.

Ay, more propitious than the hours
We framed our wishes tender,
When over city spires and towers
We watched the first new splendor.

And in that cloud-hung, curious cup
Strange semblance could discover
Of dying woman leaning up
To clasp a recreant lover.

Ah, me ! I wished for life, and you
For love—yourself confessed it !
Our wishes came too true, too true !
Flowers on your grave attest it.

Across my shoulder, then, to see
Desire's own magic lever,
To-night I wish that you may be
In heaven, mine own, forever.

LA COQUETA.

Light on your victims' graves, love,
Your errant footsteps fall:
Yet all men are your slaves, love,
And I the most of all.

LA DESDICHA.

My palace reared—war came with flame—I fled:
I loved a tender woman . . . . she is dead!

LA MUERTE.

In this cool wood
(For which my soul had yearned
Through anguished hours that burned
The heart to unvailing ash)—
In this serene and green,
Divinest last abode,
Here have I sweet demesne.
I would not move a lash—
I would not stir though all the planets crash.
Long days I prayed for love, since love meant life—
Prayed in the torment of an endless strife—
God sent me this instead
(Men call me dead),
O, God is good!

CRUZ ROJA.

Guns' blaze and scream of shrapnel—deafening roar—
In that last moment all life's pain seemed spent:
Cold heart of stone and traitor's lips that sent
Me hither, ye should vex me never more.

As in a blissful dream I float again
Through a sweet, shadowy wood of childhood's land:
A brooklet flickers 'neath the leaves, my hand
Scoops up the crystal to my lips. . . . and then

Ah! rousing then I know the tropic glare—
And one pale, pitying figure bending low:
The blood-red cross upon the sleeve of snow—
O, is it woman or an angel there? . . .

Guns' blaze—or fever—was it death or sleep?
All torture melts—I only know these eyes
More softly luminous than sea or skies—
O, tenderest eyes that e'er could smile—or weep!

ENCANTO.

Which were the sweeter? . . .
That night in the dark
Her kisses rained over
My face. No completer
Could Heaven be. . . . Hark!
Has she come with steps fleeter
Than angels' to cover
With flowers the stark
Ignominious mark
Of my grave?
These are sweeter:
Her hands that discover—
Her tears that rain over
My tomb. O, to meet her
I rise from the dark—
From death's silence I greet her!

IN A GARRET.

What does it matter if I sit and sing
  To garret walls that have not any grace,
And my poor bed be rude as anything,
  And my one window rain or dust deface?

What does it matter, though the day be fair,
  The sky a glory and the surging town
A world of joy in which I have no share
  Or sea of darkness wherein grief should drown.

Day comes with countless burdens cold and slow,
  Night comes as vast and terrible as Love—
The clamor of a million lives below
  The silence of a million worlds above.

What does it matter if I sit and sing
  To garret walls as gray as prison stone?
What does it matter—this or anything—
  Since you are absent and I dwell alone?

DEO GRATIAS.

Thank God you are a woman (this said she
With tired eyes softening in the lamp's warm light)
Thank God you are a woman, bound or free,
With all a woman's suffering heart to-night !

God made the world o'er strong, to long endure
Swift whirling through the vastnesses of space,
O'er-strong of rock and sea, in all secure,
But then—most cruel-hard in every place !

Even man should be of iron strength He meant,
All iron and flint, in purpose merciless,
And formed him stern of soul in this intent,
To rival nature in its mightiness.

Then, moved perchance by some strange look of pain,
Here on the dark Earth face, inert and cold,
He turned and breathed upon the sphere again,
And woman blossomed like a flower of gold.

All light, all warmth, all impulse came with her
Gold bloom and gold for chains to link and move,
And gold to make more precious what else were
Too dark and dead God's graciousness to prove.

All light, all warmth, all impulse to the end,
Whether she bloom love-cherished on one heart
Thats holds her sacred, or in pain ascend
Some martyr pathway to fulfill her part.

Whether she toil in patience, meek and lone,
Or faithful through Siberian wastes be led,
Or burning deserts traverse to her own,
Or kneel beside the coffin of her dead !

Thank God you are a woman ! Born for pain
More than for joy, but evermore to be
The purer metal gleaming through the stain
On the dark substance of humanity !

IN A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE.

She was just of that build ; call it slight, call it fine,
What you will—only charming ; the tint of the wine,
Richest amber, was found in the hue of her hair,
And her eyes, not the wide ones that wonder and stare,
But those that shine darkling like waters well hid
Where the prodigal lashes curve low from each lid.

Such an hour as the now you should come, Eloise,
From the depths of the forest, the bosom of seas.
From the mountains, the meadows, the rivers remote,
Subtle shadow, soft shape, to my side you should float,
Till I see you again as I saw you that night,
When you sparkled and warmed, heart of fire, soul of light.

Eloise ! From the amber what memories spring—
Tales of hope that brought madness and keen suffering.
Yours the fault ? Mine the folly ? Yours folly—mine sin ?
(How the bubbles incessantly gather and spin !
What a whirlpool of danger ! What castles in Spain !
What a world to be wrecked—in a glass of champagne !)

Yours the fault ? Mine the folly ? Nay, Eloise, nay !
Never made with the durable grossness of clay,
You were fleeting as sunlight and fickle, perforce,
And I loved you. No more ! If my love was too coarse
And you broke from its thralldom and soared further on
It was only the natural. Still, with you gone ? . . .

Sipping slowly, the vista expands, Eloise,
To the width of new worlds lying off in strange seas.
Days of splendor, long valleys with green, hidden ways,
Mighty mountain peaks wrapped in mysterious haze ;
And a sky to shame turquoise with splendor above,
And myself at your side, and a limitless love.

From the depths of the forests, the bosom of seas,
From the regions of somewhere, to-night, Eloise,
I invoke your sweet spirit, I wait, I insist,
Till I fancy it hovers in luminous mist.
Through the lens of my longing I sight you again
Rising out of the glow—in a glass of champagne.

GRAY SKIES.

Whichever way I go,
  Whichever road I take,
The wind it turns and turns to blow
  In my face, till my eyelids ache,
The wind of Winter or Spring
  It follows me everywhere,
Follows and whistles with stab and sting
  Hard for a soul to bear.

However long I gaze,
  However long and high,
The sun will never shed its rays,
  There's only cloud in the sky;
The cloud of March or of May
  It shadows me every where,
Shadows and freezes with pall of gray
  More than a soul can bear.

Wherever—tired or fleet—
  Wherever I may go,
The stones of the pavement bruise my feet,
  And the earth it turns too slow;
The earth, like a torture wheel,
  Racking me everywhere;
Racking and rending me till I feel
  More than a soul can bear.

Whatever strength I'd show,
  Whatever good I'd plot,
The dark it presses and hurts me so,
  And the thought that I have you not!
The thought that I have not you,
  It follows me everywhere;
Follows and pierces me through and through,
  Worse than a soul can bear.

THE RESCUE.

In the desert of no-man's Love,
  That is walled by the forests of Doubt—
With the fathomless sky above,
  And never a pathmark out—

I was lost for a length of days,
  Far lost from the sight of men,
And trod in an endless maze
  My own tracks over again.

No green of oasis traced,
  Nor herb, nor glimmer of dew
Was there on the arid waste—
  Nor cloud o'erhead in the blue.

I was numb and I felt no pain,
  For the desert is high and chill—
Remote from the heat and strain
  Of the world and its murderous will.

I was numb and my strength was spent,
  I had sunk to the earth to die—
When afar the forests were rent,
  And the rescuer came with a cry.

Oh, he bore me back on his breast
  Through thickets of Doubt and Dread—
And brought me to Love and Unrest. . . .
  Now I would he had found me dead !

TELLING HER FORTUNE.

And bits of bread are money, and the drop
That trembles at the bottom tears, you know:
Three times you turn it round and then you stop
And make your wish and hold the teacup so.

And where you see a heap that's dark and thick
Why that might be a grave—don't look so white!
So many die, and any one that's sick—
Of course it might not be, although—it might.

And there's a winding road; I can't make out
If there are carriages, but even so,
A wedding party to the church, no doubt,
As likely as a funeral, don't you know.

Then here's a ring; you get your wish is clear;
And underneath a letter—three in line—
With startling news of some one very dear,
And right away confusion, here's the sign.

Of course it might be death. And he's away
And sick, and if he died they'd have to write.
You wished for money: well, the will would say
How much was—There you go again with fright.

But then, if I were you I would not weep:
If any one should die it would not be
Simply because you thought you saw a heap
Of—something in the cup that held your tea!

OFF MAYSI.

I slept to the waves' nocturne, in the light of a single star,
The splendid midnight god of the Southern heavens afar,
And the starshine bathed my brain with a vision of planets free
As the ship went sailing down on the breast of a sapphire sea.

I waked and the day had come, for land on the starboard grew
Till the cliffs of an island shone through languorous veils of blue;
And I knew the emerald sheen and the amethyst overglow
On the breast of the lovely slave—the daughter of Spain and woe.

I gazed and the turquoise bowl of a marvelous sky was near
And closed with a rim of gold warm over the widening sphere,
And the sea was a blaze of fire with the cimetars of the sun
Flung forth in a burst of joy as the battle of dawn was won.

And the flame to the westward ran and shook in the breakers' rise
At the base of the island couch where a hapless creature lies,
Where a hapless creature waits, as the perishing dumbly wait,
A mother unwed—of sons that are born to suffer and hate.

Then over the sapphire sea with the swords of the sun aflame
And out of the languorous mists of the island hills there came
A sudden, an anguished cry of a thousand voices blent
In tortured, terrible prayer for the end of a punishment.

Mother Spain! (it rang,) mother Spain! Oh, heed thy daughter's tears!
She is bound with the chains of crime and cursed with the yoke of years,
Her sons with a birth-wrong strive and shriek for their father's name,
The sons of the freedom she might not wed, the lover she loves in shame.

Mother Spain! (the desolate wail,) oh, heed thy child's desire?
Thou mother of nations free from the gulf to the land of fire.
Oh, harken and heed and save, thou mother of conquerers dead,
And break the fetters of her who waits and bid her rise and wed!

And I slept again that night in the glow of the magic star,
The gracious midnight god of the Southern heavens afar,
And the starshine bathed my brain with a vision of Cuba free,
As the ship went sailing down on the breast of the sapphire sea.

MOONSET.

Down the quiet road
  From the graveyard on the hill,
Came with a soft and sighing sound
  The wind, then all was still.
Four by the Carmen bell
  (So nearly gone the night !)
Yet over the trancéd world there lay
  T hat splendid shroud of white.

Down the quiet road,
  With the wind to lead the way—
And the moonlight blanched the smooth house walls
  And turned the red tiles gray—
That sweetest fragrance came
  From the orange groves in bloom,
Till I knew that it could not be a dream
  That glorified my room.

Down the quiet road,
  With a softly measured tread,
Came when the wind had died away
  (It was no dream) the dead !
Risen from out their graves
  In the Pantheon's solemn close
Where the jasmine stars and the clavelon
  Are mingled with the rose.

Down the quiet road,
  Each with his sweet, pale face
And wistful eyes that yearned to find
  Once more his old-time place!
These souls 'twixt earth and heaven,
  They may not pass, I said,
Till they know that the living mourn no more
  And others fill their stead.

But down the quiet road
  Till the moonlight cease to flow
And the cock crow shrill for the coming dawn,
  Their steps shall come and go;
And the scent from the orange trees
  And the wind shall float before
As they walk through the slumbering town
  Forever and ever more.

ANGELICA.

Look at me with your lovely Spanish eyes
  And say, "My friend," in that soft speech of yours;
  Ay, speak to me with that sweet voice that cures
The anguish striking through me dagger-wise;
And let me dream, the while your warm hand lies
  So close to mine its presence there ensures
  A sense of safety from the world's long lures,
And so forget the wounds that agonize.

So let me think no more—no more than this:
  If only you and I were there alone,
Back in the days I dare not dream of now!
  Dear Heaven, to kiss your eyelids and your brow,
And your soft hair and your sweet lips to kiss—
  And only your pure passion to have known!

TRANSLATIONS

FROM

JOSÉ MARTÍ

CONTRASTS.

A loyal man am I
From the land where the palms are growing—
And fain would sing ere I die
The songs of a heart o'erflowing.

I am come from everywhere—
Toward everywhere am tending ;
Art am I 'mid arts all fair—
In the mountains a peak unbending.

I know the curious names
Of woodland herb and flower,
And of mortal pains and shames,
And of Grief's sublimest dower.

Through the midnight's darkest pall
I have seen a burst of splendor,
A luminous glory fall
In rays divine and tender.

I have seen sweet pinions starting
From beauteous women's shoulders—
And the butterfly's glad parting
From the husk that stays and moulders.

I have seen a man go cover
His wound and staunch its flow—
Nor ever the name discover
Of her who had dealt the blow.

Twice like a flame enwreathing
Have I seen the soul shine through :
When the poor old man stopped breathing—
And when *she* bade me adieu.

Once I trembled : we stood
  At the vineyard gate and a bee
Flew under the dainty hood
  Of my little one—ay, ah me !

Once, too, my heart went leaping
  With a joy of joys tremendous—
When the jailer read me weeping,
  The sentence of death stupendous.

Now a soft, sweet sound I hear,
  Like a sigh, over land and sea :
No sigh, 'tis my son most dear
  Who awakes and will come to me.

If out of the casket royal
  Of all the world's jewels I
Might choose, 'twere a friendship loyal
  I'd gather—and pass love by.

I have seen the wounded eagle
  High in the azure flying—
With a flight serene and regal—
  And the snake in its earth hole dying.

I know when the wan world sinks
  To sleep in the Night's vast shadow,
The murmurous song from the brinks
  Of streamlets deep in the meadow.

I have reached the hand of boldness
  Out over my threshold bare
To touch though numbed with its coldness
  A star that had fallen there.

Deep in my breast is hidden
  Its pain—for the shame-bowed son
Of a people tyrant-ridden
  Must battle till life is done.

All things are fair and loyal,
  Harmonious all and right—
And all, like the diamond royal,
  Are darkness ere ever light.

I know the pomp when they bury
  A fool with their splendid woe ;
And the fruit of the cemetery,
  The finest the land can show.

Hushed are my strains—and weary
  As one who understands—
I hang in a nook long dreary
  My doctor's gown and bands.

THE ALARM.

Dream I of cloisters of marble
Where in divinest of silence
Standing the heroes are marshalled.
Nightly by light of the spirit
Speak I with these—ay, for nightly
They are in file and I wander
Threading the files : gravely kissing
Carven white hands—till they open
Eyes of stone pale above tremulous
Beards of stone. . . Nay, they seem weeping.
Vibrant the swords in their scabbards :
Silent I kiss their hands. . . . Nightly

Speak I with these in their cloisters :
They are in file and I wander
Threading the ranks till a-weeping
Clasp I a statue : "O, statue,
Now it is said that thy children
Drink their own blood from the poisonous
Cups of their cruelest masters ;
Speak the foul tongue of the ruffians,
Eat of the bread of opprobrium
Shameless at red-reeking tables.
Ay, and in feeble contention
Lose their last courage. O, statue,
Statue that sleepest, they say it,
Dead is thy race and forgotten ! "

Fells me to earth with a single
Blow then, the hero of marble:
Seizes my collar and harshly
Sweeps the bare ground with my body:
Lifts he an arm—lo resplendent—
Blinding, as of the sun's radiance. . . . .
Loud the alarm through the cloisters—
Pallid hands seeking the scabbard—
Forth leap the heroes of marble!

IN SECRET.

Pour out, O heart, thy sorrow
  Only in secret, so
  Guarding thy pride to know
Others no smart shall borrow.

AT THE SALON.

Yester-e'en I saw her there
  In the splendid halls of art—
And wildly leaped my heart
  At sight of that woman fair.

In a foreground barren and chill
  She sits—'tis her husband creeps
Faint to her feet and sleeps—
  At her breast the child is still.

In the wan light sits she bowed,
  At her side amid wisps of straw
Some crusts that the dogs might gnaw—
  Her rags cling sharp as a shroud.

From the sterile soil no ray
  Of hope in a blade of green,
Nor sheltering roof is seen—
  Though the skies are heavy and gray.

Ah, this is the woman fair
  Who stole away my heart
In the splendid halls of art
  Yester-e'en as I wandered there!

PREFERENCE.

I know of Egypt—and greet her—
  Nigritia and Persia and fountains
Of Xenophon's learning: yet sweeter
  To me is the air of the mountains.

I know the histories olden
  Of man and his hates undying;
Sweeter the bees in the golden
  Delights of the meadows flying.

I know what the wind songs teach me
  Through branches that whisper and flutter—
No one shall dare to impeach me
  I love the secrets they utter.

I know of a deer that frightened
  Creeps back to the hills to die:
And a passionless heart unlightened
  That soon in the grave shall lie.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Sorrows? Who dares to assert
I have sorrows? Nay, after the flashing
Of lightning and thunderous crashing
I shall have time for my hurt.

I know of a trouble too deep
For sounding—'mid pains that are nameless—
The slavery of man, shamed or shameless—
A trouble to make the world weep.

There are mountains—high mountains to climb,—
These first: then, my soul, we shall see
Who hath striven to rob me of thee,
Then, my soul, for the task will be time!

THE LOWLY.

With the earth's despised and lowly
My lot I would cast; to me
The rivulet wandering slowly
Is tenderer than the sea.

THE HUNT BALL.

I am here in the merry madness
  Of the huntsmen's frolic and show:
  'Tis the hunters' ball, I know,
At the end of a year of gladness.

Duchess in violet folds
  Dancing with scarlet jacket—
  Viscount timing the racket,
Beating a gong he holds.

And the redcoats go and come,
  And the clouds of gauze are vying
  Like leaves of Autumn flying
In the path of a blindman dumb.

OF WOMAN.

Of tyrants? Well, of tyrants
  Say everything, more, repeat it,—
  With slavery's hand aye beat it,
Thy furious hate of tyrants.

Of error? Why then of error
  Say darkness and crooked winding—
  Say all the vile thou art finding
Of tyranny and of error.

Of woman? Nay, though of woman
  Thou feelest the wound that slays,
  Yet never tarnish thy days
By word that is ill of woman.

AGAINST TYRANTS.

Honor to him who would seize
  The tyrant and cast to the ground:
Honor—where'er he be found—
  Be he Cuban or Aragonese!

WHEN I DIE.

I think when the sunlight warms me,
With a schoolboy's simple pleasure,
Of the song-bird's gladsome measure
And his bright black eye that charms me.

When I die, without country (nor stooping
For tyrant or master) I pray
On my coffin some tender hand lay
A few flowers—and a flag softly drooping.

STRENGTH.

What matter if thy stab
My back hath suddenly cleft?
I have my verses left
Mightier than thy stab.

What matter if fiery sorrow
Dry ocean and blacken sky?
My verse, my strength till I die,
Is born with the wings of sorrow.

WOUND AND SONG.

Woman, my breast I bare
  Knowing thou'lt wound it sore:
Would that it greater were
  So thou should'st wound it more.

For this, dull soul, I have found
  The truth, a marvelous thing:
The deeper the cruel wound,
  The sweeter the song I sing.

DISCOVERY.

I, who live though my heart hath died,
  Am great discoverer as you see,
Since yester-eve I certified
  Love's unfailing remedy.

When too darkly lowers the night
  And thy soul for death is yearning,
Go forth, do good to others and swift returning
  Glow, bathed in heaven's own light!

THE ANGELS.

My friend the painter may paint
  His angels of golden glow
  Kneeling in clouds of snow
'Mid suns that are holy and faint.

But paint me with brushes or inks
  Those dear young angels' faces
  Who brought me with tender graces
Their two little fragrant pinks.

IN MY GARDEN.

I've a white rose growing sweetly,
  Through every day in the year,
  For the friend who comes sincere
With his handclasp warm and kindly :
And for the cruel who blindly
  Would tear my heart till it bleed,
  Thistle nor hateful weed,
But the white rose growing sweetly.

DISILLUSION.

The oars from the locks I lifted,
  On the breast of the lake most sweet
To float in the golden sunlight—
  In my heart a sun complete.

When a-sudden I saw—and sickened
  Of the stench that rose on the air—
A dead fish rotten, reeking
  At my feet in the row-boat there.

NOVEMBER.

I ne'er shall cease to remember
  The light of an autumn morn,
  When a fresh green bud was born
On the leafless bough of November.

The morn when the moments ran,
  As there by the fireless fender
  A maiden sweet and tender
Reached her hand to the tired old man.

OF THE FLESH.

I know : of the flesh may be made
A flower to bloom—may be made
By the power of a love undefiled
A heaven—and a sweet child.

Of the flesh, too, there is fashioned
The scorpion—ay, are fashioned
The burrowing worms that blight
And the hideous birds of night.

IN THE OPEN.

I would pass from the world with fleetness
By Nature's fairest gate ;
In a bier of leafy sweetness
Let me rest in simple state.

Leave me not in the darkness lying,
Like a traitor cowardly, base—
I am good and I fear not dying
With the sunlight on my face.

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